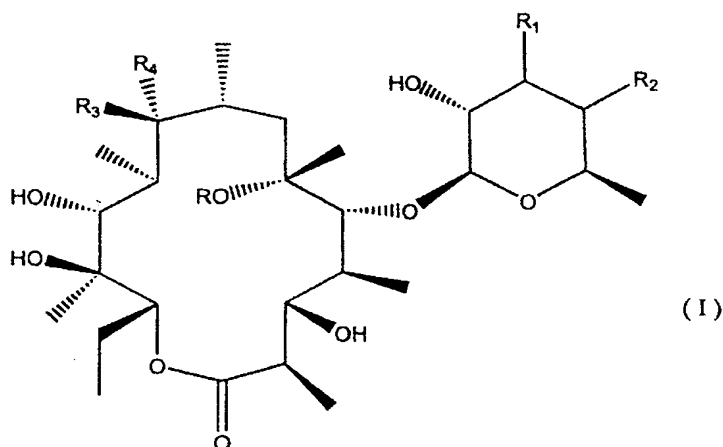


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) A compound of formula

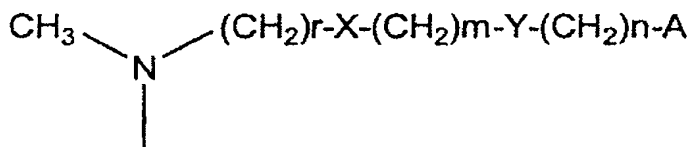


wherein

R is a hydrogen atom or a methyl group;

R₁ is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-di(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group, an N,N-di(C₁-C₃)alkylamino-N-oxide group, an N-(C₁-C₃)alkyl-N-benzyl-amino group, an N-(C₁-C₄)acyl-N-(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C₁-C₄)alkylamino]acetyl-N-(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group

or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆, where R₆ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl, a C₁-C₃ alkoxy carbonyl group or a benzyloxy carbonyl group;

Y is a C₆H₄ group, a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur or is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆ where R₆ has the meanings given above;

r is an integer from 1 to 3;

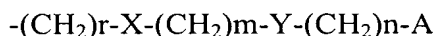
m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is an integer from 0 to 2;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂;

R₂ is a hydrogen atom or forms a bond together with R₁;

R₃ is a hydroxy group or forms a group =N-O-R₅ together with R₄, and R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, a benzyl optionally substituted with one or two substituents selected from nitro, hydroxy, carboxy, amino, linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, C₁-C₄ alkoxy carbonyl groups, aminocarbonyl groups or cyano groups or a chain of formula



wherein

r, m, n, X, Y and A have the meanings given above;

R₄ is a hydrogen atom or forms a group =N-O-R₅ together with R₃, and R₅ has the meanings given above;

and the pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof,

provided, however, that

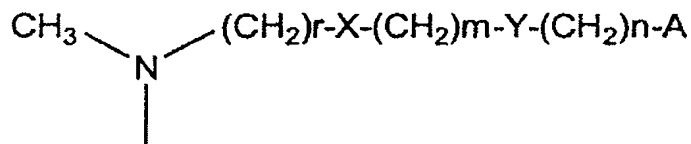
R₁ is not a dimethylamino group when R₃ is hydroxy, and both R₂ and R₄ are a hydrogen atom;

R₁ is not a dimethylamino group when in the substituent =N-O-R₅ in the 9 position, R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, an unsubstituted benzyl group, or a chain -(CH₂)_r-X-(CH₂)_m-Y-(CH₂)_n-A where r is 1, X is O, m is 2, Y is O, n is 1, and A is H;

R₁ is not a methylethylamino group when in the substituent =N-O-R₅ in the 9 position, R₅ is a linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, or an unsubstituted benzyl group.

2. (Original) A compound according to Claim 1, wherein the oxime group that may be present in position 9 is of E configuration.

3. (Original) A compound according to Claim 1, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N-(C_1 - C_3)alkyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C_1 - C_3)alkyl-N-methylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C_1 - C_4)acyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C_1 - C_4)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O or NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C_1 - C_3 alkyl;

Y, when n is 0, is a C_6H_4 group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur; or, when n is other than 0, is O or NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C_1 - C_3 alkyl;

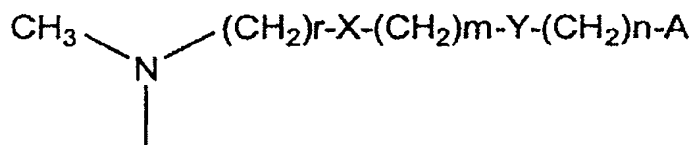
r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is the integer 1 or 2;

n is an integer from 0 to 2;

or R_1 forms a bond together with R_2 .

4. (Original) A compound according to Claim 3, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-dimethylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C_1 - C_2)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

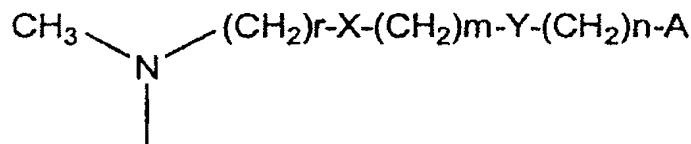
r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is the integer 1 or 2;

n is the integer 0 or 1;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂.

5. (Original) A compound according to Claim 4, wherein R₁ is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-dimethylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylaminoethylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole;

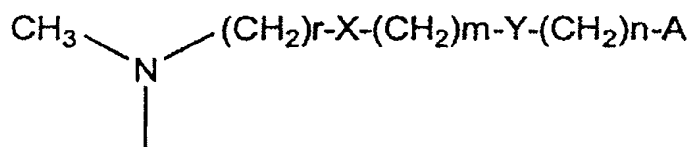
X is NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂.

6. (Original) A compound according to Claim 1, wherein R₃ is a hydroxy group and R₄ is a hydrogen atom provided, however, that R₁ is not a dimethylamino group.

7. (Original) A compound according to Claim 6, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N-(C_1 - C_3)alkyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C_1 - C_3)alkyl-N-methylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C_1 - C_4)acyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C_1 - C_4)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O or NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C_1 - C_3 alkyl;

Y, when n is 0, is a C_6H_4 group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur; or, when n is other than 0, is O or NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C_1 - C_3 alkyl;

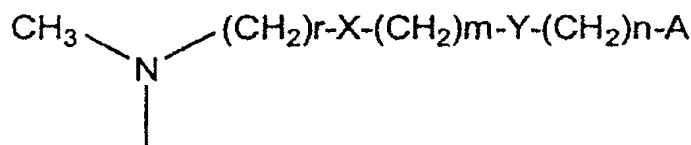
r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is the integer 1 or 2;

n is an integer from 0 to 2;

or R_1 forms a bond together with R_2 .

8. (Original) A compound according to Claim 7, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-dimethylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C_1 - C_2)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

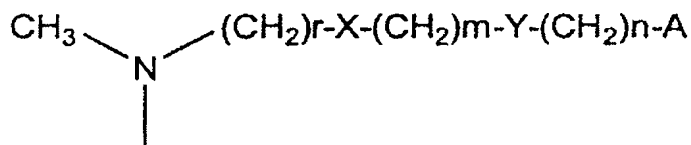
r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is the integer 1 or 2;

n is the integer 0 or 1;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂.

9. (Original) A compound according to Claim 8, wherein R₁ is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-dimethylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylaminoethylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

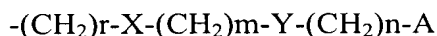
A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole;

X is NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂.

10. (Original) A compound according to Claim 1, wherein R₃ forms an =N-O-R₅ group together with R₄, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched (C₁-C₃)alkyl, a benzyl optionally substituted with one or two substituents selected from nitro, hydroxy, carboxy, amino, linear or branched (C₁-C₃) alkyl and cyano or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl;

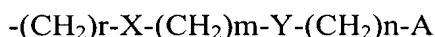
Y, when n is 0, is a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur; or, when n is other than 0, is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl;

r is the integer 1 or 2;

m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is an integer from 0 to 2.

11. (Original) A compound according to Claim 10, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a methyl, a benzyl or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

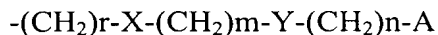
Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

r is 2;

m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is the integer 0 or 1.

12. (Original) A compound according to Claim 11, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a methyl, a benzyl or a chain of formula



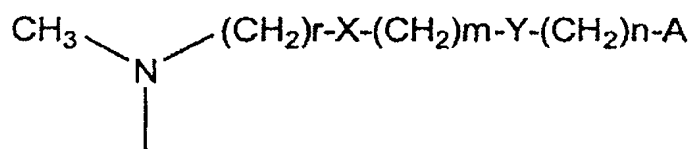
wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole;

X is NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom.

13. (Original) A compound according to Claim 1, wherein R₁ is a hydrogen atom, an N-(C₁-C₃)alkyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C₁-C₃)alkyl-N-methylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-(C₁-C₄)acyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C₁-C₄)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

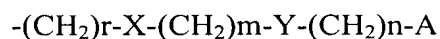
r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is the integer 1 or 2;

n is the integer 0 or 1;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂;

simultaneously, R₃ forms a group =N-O-R₅ together with R₄, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched (C₁-C₃) alkyl, a benzyl optionally substituted with one or two substituents selected from nitro, hydroxy, carboxy, amino, linear or branched (C₁-C₃)alkyl and cyano or a chain of formula



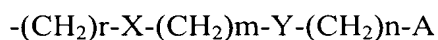
wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl;

Y, when n is 0, is a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur; or, when n is other than 0, is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom or a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl;
r is the integer 1 or 2;
m is an integer from 1 to 6;
n is an integer from 0 to 2.

14. (Original) A compound according to Claim 13, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a methyl, a benzyl or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole;

X is O or NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

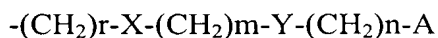
Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring selected from pyrrole, thiophene, furan, imidazole, oxazole, thiazole, pyridine, pyrimidine, triazole and thiadiazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

r is 2;

m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is the integer 0 or 1.

15. (Original) A compound according to Claim 14, wherein R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a methyl, a benzyl or a chain of formula



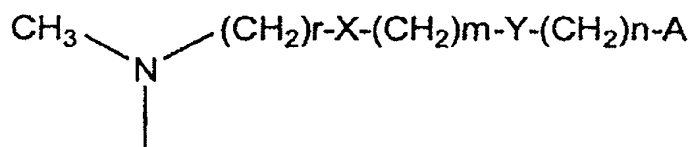
wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole;

X is NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom;

Y is, when n is 0, a C₆H₄ group or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole; or, when n is 1, NR₆ and R₆ is a hydrogen atom.

16. (Original) A compound according to Claim 15, wherein R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-dimethylamino group, an N,N-dimethylamino-N-oxide group, an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group, an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C_1 - C_2)alkylamino]acetyl-N-methylamino group or a chain of formula



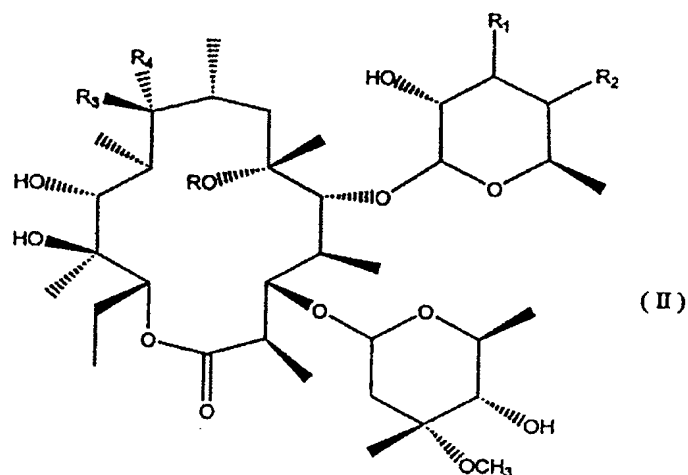
wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole;

X is NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom;

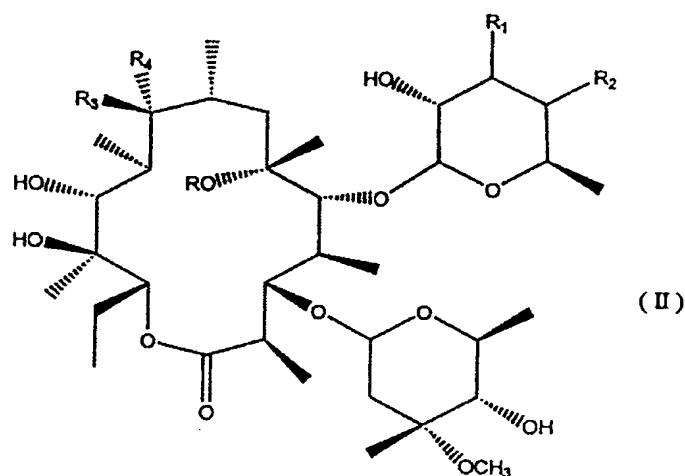
Y is, when n is 0, a C_6H_4 group or a heteroaryl ring selected from thiophene, furan, thiazole, pyridine and triazole; or, when n is 1, NR_6 and R_6 is a hydrogen atom; or R_1 forms a bond together with R_2 .

17. (Original) A process for preparing a compound according to Claim 1, characterized in that the L-cladinose moiety in 3 position is removed from the erythromycin A compounds of formula



wherein R, R_1 , R_2 , R_3 and R_4 are defined as in Claim 1;
 via a hydrolysis reaction.

18. (Original) Process according to Claim 17, wherein in formula II R_3 is a hydroxy group and R_4 is a hydrogen atom.
19. (Original) Process according to Claim 17, wherein the removal of the cladinose is performed via an acid hydrolysis reaction catalyzed in the presence of a mineral acid and a protic organic solvent.
20. (Currently Amended) A compound of formula

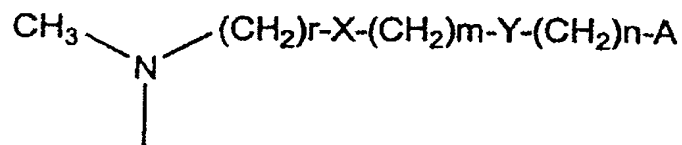


wherein

R is a hydrogen atom or a methyl group;

R_1 is a hydrogen atom, an N,N -di(C_1 - C_3)alkylamino group, an N,N -di(C_1 - C_3)alkylamino- N -oxide group, an N -(C_1 - C_3)alkyl- N -benzylamino group, an N -(C_1 - C_4)acyl- N -(C_1 - C_3)alkylamino group, an N -[N,N -dimethylamino(C_1 - C_4)alkylamino]acetyl- N -(C_1 - C_3)alkylamino group

or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆, where R₆ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl, a C₁-C₃ alkoxy carbonyl group or a benzyloxy carbonyl group;

Y is a C₆H₄ group, a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur or is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆ where R₆ has the meanings given above;

r is an integer from 1 to 3;

m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is an integer from 0 to 2;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂;

R₂ is a hydrogen atom or forms a bond together with R₁;

R₃ is a hydroxy group;

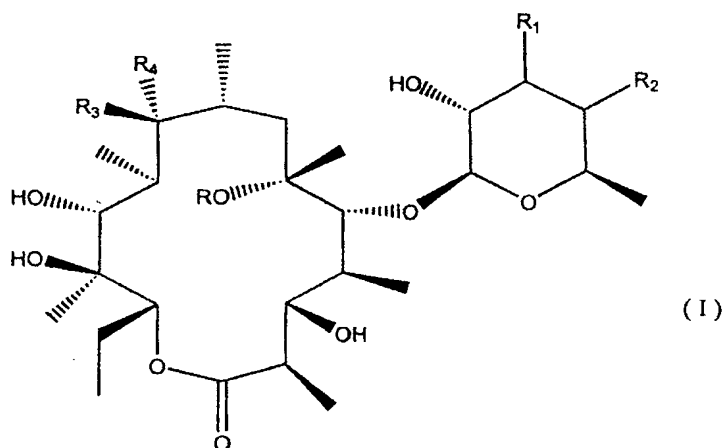
R₄ is a hydrogen atom;

and the pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof;

provided, however, that (i) R₁ is not an N,N-dimethyl amino group, ~~or~~ and (ii) R₁ is not an N,N-dimethyl amino-N-oxide group when R is a hydrogen atom.

21. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ forms a bond together with R₂.
22. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-benzyl-N-methylamino group.
23. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-acetyl-N-methylamino group.
24. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-[N,N-dimethylaminoethylamino]acetyl-N-methyl amino group.
25. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-methyl-N-3-[(2-thiazolylmethyl)amino]propylamino group.

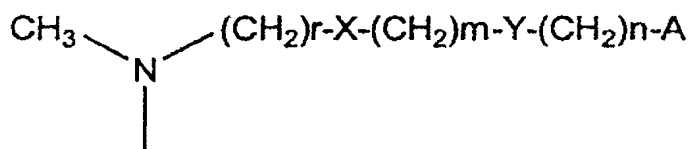
26. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-2-[2-[(2-thiazolylmethyl)amino]ethylamino]ethyl-N-methylamino group.
27. (Original) A compound according to Claim 20, wherein R is a hydrogen atom and R₁ is an N-2-[2-(benzylamino)ethylamino]ethyl-N-methylamino group.
28. (Previously Presented) The compound de(N-methyl)-9-dihydroerythromycin A.
29. (Previously Presented) The compound de(N-methyl)-descladinosyl-9-dihydro-erythromycin A.
30. (Currently Amended) A method for the treatment and prophylaxis of an inflammatory disease comprising administering a pharmaceutical composition comprising a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of formula (I)



wherein

R is a hydrogen atom or a methyl group;

R₁ is a hydrogen atom, an N,N-di(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group, an N,N-di(C₁-C₃)alkylamino-N-oxide group, an N-(C₁-C₃)alkyl-N-benzyl-amino group, an N-(C₁-C₄)acyl-N-(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group, an N-[N,N-dimethylamino(C₁-C₄)alkylamino]acetyl-N-(C₁-C₃)alkylamino group
or a chain of formula



wherein

A is a hydrogen atom, a phenyl or a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur;

X is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆, where R₆ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₃ alkyl, a C₁-C₃ alkoxy carbonyl group or a benzyloxy carbonyl group;

Y is a C₆H₄ group, a five- or six-membered heteroaryl ring having from one to three hetero atoms selected from nitrogen, oxygen and sulphur or is O, S, SO, SO₂ or NR₆ where R₆ has the meanings given above;

r is an integer from 1 to 3;

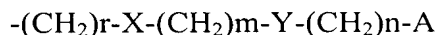
m is an integer from 1 to 6;

n is an integer from 0 to 2;

or R₁ forms a bond together with R₂;

R₂ is a hydrogen atom or forms a bond together with R₁;

R₃ is a hydroxy group or forms a group =N-O-R₅ together with R₄, and R₅ is a hydrogen atom, a linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, a benzyl optionally substituted with one or two substituents selected from nitro, hydroxy, carboxy, amino, linear or branched C₁-C₅ alkyl, C₁-C₄ alkoxy carbonyl groups, aminocarbonyl groups or cyano groups or a chain of formula



wherein

r, m, n, X, Y and A have the meanings given above;

R₄ is a hydrogen atom or forms a group =N-O-R₅ together with R₃, and R₅ has the meanings given above;

or of a pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof,

together with a pharmaceutically acceptable vehicle to a patient in need thereof.

31. (Cancelled)

32. (Currently Amended) A method for treating ~~an~~ a respiratory disease comprising administering a composition according to Claim 30 to a patient in need thereof.